



68th Midwest Fish and Wildlife Conference  
BE THE CHANGE • MANAGE LOCALLY CONSERVE GLOBALLY

Madison, Wisconsin  
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**Wildlife Program**

Karl Martin (Tami Ryan, Daniel Storm, Scott Hull, Karl Malcolm, and Michele Windsor)  
Wisconsin Dept. of Natural Resources  
107 Sutliff Avenue  
Rhineland, WI 54501-3349  
715-365-8917  
[karl.martin@wisconsin.gov](mailto:karl.martin@wisconsin.gov)

**Student Paper Awards**

Ben Frater  
US Forest Service  
Chequamegon-Nicolet National Forest  
Park Falls, WI  
715-362-1328  
[bjfrater@fs.fed.us](mailto:bjfrater@fs.fed.us)

Most important advice – don't reinvent the wheel. Most things went very smoothly and we can pass along databases, spreadsheets, etc. to make your lives a lot easier. I can email the forms that we used, get you in touch with the database coordinator/developer, etc.

**Order of things to be done**

December – Decide on program chairs. I would recommend one for wildlife and one for fisheries to keep it simple for contacts and getting things done.

January/February – set up program committee. I had 5 folks on the wildlife program committee and 1 chair of the student judging subcommittee. The 5 individuals on wildlife program committee reviewed papers and served as moderators. First call for contributed symposia and workshops should be sent out electronically.

February/March – Decide on symposia and workshops. This needs to be balanced with available space and balancing of symposia vs. contributed papers. We ended up with a 50/50 split of symposia and contributed papers – this seemed to work out well. If you didn't get enough symposia you do a second call.

May – First call for papers/posters.

June- Final symposia and workshop outlines that include titles and authors are due. It should be noted that the symposia organizers won't actually have their speaker list finalized and completely filled until late summer, but this makes them start the process so you can evaluate whether they will actually pull off what they have proposed.

July – Second call for papers/posters.

August – Final call for papers. Symposia should be pretty well set so you can fill in the program with the contributed papers.

Early September – have the reviewers review abstracts and return reviews.

Mid September – Finalize program – we stalled on this and that made it more problematic. I would get the final program in place by late September and have it emailed out with a registration reminder to the complete email list.

Late September – Send out acceptance letters to all presenters. If there are more paper submissions than open slots offer posters to those that are rejected and try to have at least 8 alternates that will do a paper in the event of a cancellations.

October – Invite and finalize moderators for the various sessions. Once this is done put the program on the website with email links so presenters and moderators can contact each other to get introductions, etc. Ideally the program should be available to potential registrants by early October.

Early November – Send out instructions to moderators and presenters on what, where, when, etc.

### **Workshop and Symposia**

Call for workshop and symposia proposals – sent out and put on website by February 15 with a Deadline of March 31. Date for final schedule of speakers by June 1<sup>st</sup>. We accepted all symposia and workshops – not sure if this is a good idea or not – the program committee may want to evaluate the worthiness of the various proposals and reserve the right to reject submissions. The problem we had with so many symposia is that there was less room for paper submissions, although this worked out ok in the end.

### **Paper and Poster Submissions**

First call for papers is May 1<sup>st</sup>. Our initial deadline was July 31<sup>st</sup>, but we decided to make it August 31<sup>st</sup>. This was fine, but we didn't evaluate papers until late September or early October and that was too late. Many authors called and sent emails – need to get this finalized in September would be my advice.

One key to make the job of sorting papers easier is to have a well designed web-linked database so the abstract submissions are immediately downloaded into the database. We

thought long and hard about the fields and this made our life much easier in the end, because we could search by authors, title, location, etc.

The one glitch we had was that some federal employees were blocked from entering their data in the website and sent their information in separately as an attachment to an email. This was extra work for us and confusion for presenters and should be avoided if possible.

We did not have the authors specify if there talk was a fish or wildlife submission. This added some confusion since the program chairs did this independently and a couple of papers fell through the cracks. I would have the authors check a box if it's a fish or wildlife submission.

Going through 200+ abstracts is a lot of work. We have 150 poster submissions, 220 symposia submissions and 240 paper submissions for both fish and wildlife subject areas. I set up a committee of 6 (5 reviewers plus myself) and had groups of 2 people review 1/3 of the abstracts. Phil Moy, the fisheries program chair, did them all himself and that was more work and is more subjective if you do end up rejecting a lot of papers (always good to have 2 people review them).

We were fortunate to have a DNR person coordinate our database and a DNR person develop the program at a glance, send out email confirmations, develop signage, etc. If these resources aren't available 'in house' you'll need to set funding aside to hire someone to do this work.

To develop session titles we grouped papers by subject area and combined subject areas that did not have enough submissions. Tweaking is required to get full sessions. When placing the sessions I tried to think from a variety of attendees points of view. So I looked at folks interested in mammals, game management, birds, forests, grasslands, and education/outreach and avoided having subject area sessions overlap. For the posters we grouped them by subject area also so folks that were interested in a particular topic could go to one area rather than having to walk around to find individual posters.

### **Miscellaneous**

We would recommend having folks that are interested in being judges check a box in their registration materials so there is an easy searchable database to help coordinate the student paper judging.

Plan on having at least 4 papers and 4 posters cancelled and try to plan accordingly with substitutes, etc.

### **Conclusion**

It's hard to write down our decision-making process of the wide variety of issues that come up. If issues come up feel free to contact me and I'll try to let you know how we dealt with issues that invariably come up every year.